

Mindfulness, Wellbeing & Breathing

Wellbeing ideas - Breathing exercises, guided meditations and progressive muscle relaxation exercises are all suitable techniques to use in our daily lives to **help use to relax and manage our anxieties and fears.**



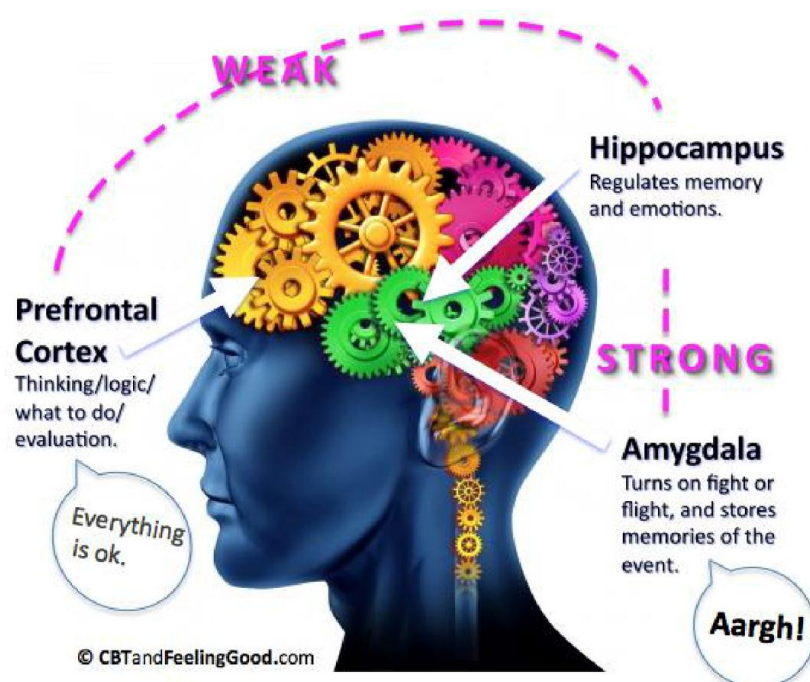
Mindfulness is about paying more **attention to the present moment**- to your thoughts and feelings and to the world around you without judgement. It can improve your mental wellbeing. It can help us to enjoy life more and understand ourselves better. It is about allowing ourselves to see the present moment clearly. When we do that, we can positively change the way we see our lives and ourselves.

It helps with stress and anxiety. Mindfulness is an evidenced based intervention and it helps us to deal with issues more productively. We can ask, “Is trying to solve this by brooding about it helpful, or am I just caught up in my thoughts?”

It helps us to notice signs of stress and anxiety and to deal with them better.

It is beneficial but it is not for everybody. Some people find it easier to go for a walk or do other activities to cope with an over-busy mind.

We are living in a very difficult period right now. Fear is a pandemic that has taken so many people in over the last few weeks. Fear depletes the immune system and it turns off the pre-frontal cortex part of your brain, which is the part of your brain that is responsible for reasoning, behaviour and speech. So, when we are in fear and stressed, we can't even reason with ourselves, never mind trying to figure out what is going on outside of us.



<https://www.drharrybarry.com/resources/>

See Dr Harry Barry's website with useful videos on anxiety and panic attacks.

Breathing techniques help to regulate the prefrontal cortex and restore order to the chaos within. Practising breathing exercises helps bring you back into your body and it turns your mind back on, so you are able to think rationally again and see clearly. It boosts the immune system, releases stress, cleanses toxins, increases your energy and reconnects the mind and body.

Different breathing can be incorporated into your daily life to help you to reduce stress and restore calm and logical reasoning.

A lot of these techniques help to manage anxiety, but they need to be practiced regularly to keep stress as low as possible.

Breathing Techniques



Mindful Breathing Exercise

Sit in a comfortable position on the floor or in a chair.

Once seated, close your eyes, and breathe deeply and slowly.

Focus your awareness on your senses.

What can you smell?

What can you feel?

What can you hear? What can you taste?

Now bring all of your attention to your breathing.

Breathe in through your nose.

Do not breathe in deeply or force the breath in.

Simply allow the air to naturally flow in.

Notice the feeling of your lungs expanding.

Then, when it is time, breathe out gently through your mouth.

Pay attention to the feeling of the breath as it flows slowly from your mouth.

Keep your attention focused on your breathing.

You may start to think about other things, and that ok, just refocus your attention on your breathing.

Try to breathe in calmness.

Breathe out your worries and stress.

Keep the air moving slowly in and out of your body.

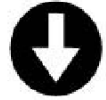
Let the parts of the body that are touching the floor, or the chair slowly sink into it as your body becomes more relaxed.

Enjoy the slowness of your breathing and the sense of relaxation and quietness of your body.

Box Breathing



Inhale ...2 ...3 ...4



Hold ...2 ...3 ...4

Breathe.

Rest ...2 ...3 ...4



Exhale ...2 ...3 ...4



Breathing Exercises

Four In, Four Out Slow Belly Breathing

1. Close your eyes.
2. Breathe through your nose.
3. Deliberately slow your breathing down.
4. Breathe from your relaxed belly.
5. Keep your breaths smooth, steady, and continuous.
6. Breathe in while counting slowly "1-2-3-4."
7. Pause.
8. Breathe out while counting slowly "1-2-3-4."
9. Pause.

Whole Body Muscle Tensing and Relaxing

1. Take a very deep breath in with your mouth open; fill your lungs up.
2. Hold your breath.
3. Tense muscles all over your body.
4. Count 5-10 seconds.
5. Let go of all the tension in your muscles and slowly let your breath out.

4-4-4-4 Breathing

1. Breathe in while counting to 4. Make it a deep, belly breath.
2. Hold your Breath while counting to 4.
3. Breathe out while counting to 4.
4. Hold your Breath while counting to 4.
5. Do this sequence 2 more times.

4-6-4-6 Breathing

1. Breath in for a count of 4.
2. Hold for a count of 6.
3. Breathe out for a count of 4.
4. Hold for a count of 6.

The Sigh

1. Breath in.
2. When you breath out, open your mouth and let the air out so you hear the sound of the air releasing, a soft sigh sound.
3. As you let the air out, relax your shoulders, neck and other muscles and let go, like you're melting.

Buteyko Small Breath Holds

1. With your mouth closed, take a small, but calm and relaxed, breath in.
2. Take a small breath out.
3. Hold your nose closed with your hand.
4. Hold for a count of 5.
5. Release.
6. Gentle, soft breathing in-between sets.
7. Tongue rests at the roof of the mouth; Teeth slightly apart; jaw relaxed; Drop shoulders; relax chest and belly; Relax facial muscles.

Alternate Nostril Breathing

1. Close the right nostril with your right thumb. Then inhale slowly through your left nostril.
2. Then close the left nostril with your right index finger and open the right nostril by removing the right thumb. Exhale very slowly through the right nostril.
3. Then draw the air through the right nostril as long as you can do it with comfort and exhale through the left nostril by removing the right index finger.
4. This is one round. Do 12 rounds.
5. Breathing in and out should be as slow, soft, steady and long as possible. But don't force.

4-7-8 Breathing

1. Exhale all the air out through your mouth.
2. Curl the tip of your tongue up to touch the hard ridge behind your upper front teeth and hold it there for the duration of the exercise.
3. Close your mouth and inhale through your nose for a count of 4. Don't force it, but take a good breath as this has to last for the next 15 counts.
4. Hold your breath for a count of 7.
5. Open your mouth and exhale through your mouth (still pressing the tip of your tongue to the hard ridge behind your upper front teeth) for a count 8. of You will make a sound as the air moves around your tongue. You may want to purse your lips if this helps you to direct the flow of your exhalation.
6. Repeat 4 times.

(instructions written by madlyinlovewithlife.com)

The Complete Breath

1. First, inhale completely at the abdomen.
2. Continue to inhale by filling in the mid-section, the area of the diaphragm.
3. Continue to inhale by filling the chest, allowing the upper chest and the shoulders to rise.
4. Then systematically release and empty from the upper portion, then the mid-section, and finally empty completely at the abdomen.

(www.swamij.com)

Relearn How To Breathe (Don Campbell)

1. Inhale deeply
2. Exhale with a short burst (as if blowing out a candle). This helps activate your diaphragm.
3. Exhale with a long, slow finish to empty the lungs. Breathlessness is from not expelling enough CO2.
4. Inhale, filling your lungs from the bottom to the top, instead of taking short sips. Most use a third of their lung capacity.
5. Hold for a moment to allow oxygen to saturate the cells.
6. Exhale slowly and completely.
7. Repeat steps 4 through 6 for five minutes.
8. Do this exercise five times a day

Progressive Muscle Relaxation Exercise

Progressive Deep Muscle Relaxation Exercises can be extremely beneficial to help with anxiety and stress management. Here is just an example. There are lots available online.

Take a deep breath and tense each muscle group (hard but not to the point of cramping) for five to 10 seconds, then exhale suddenly and completely relax the muscle group (do not relax it gradually). Give yourself 10 to 20 seconds to relax before moving to the next muscle group.

Breathe

Before you begin, take a deep breath through the nose – filling lungs completely and holding for a moment. Release through your mouth until you are out of breath. Do this three times.

Hands

Clench them – 5-10 seconds – relax. Do this twice.

Wrists and Forearms

Extend them and bend your hands back at the wrist – hold 5 – 10 seconds – relax.

Biceps and Upper Arms

Clench your hands into fists, bend your arms at the elbows, and flex your biceps. Hold 5-10 seconds and then relax. Do this twice.

Extend your arms up towards the ceiling – push as if there were an imaginary wall there. — hold 5-10 seconds and relax. Do this twice.

Shoulders

Shrug them up towards your ears. Hold 5 – 10 seconds and relax. Do this three times.

Forehead

Wrinkle it into a deep frown. Hold 5 – 10 seconds and then relax.

Around the Eyes and Bridge of the Nose

Close your eyes as tightly as possible. Hold 5 – 10 seconds and then relax. (Make sure you remove contact lenses before beginning the exercise)

Raise your eyebrows as high as you can – hold 5 – 10 seconds and then relax. Do this 3 times.

Cheeks and Jaw

Smile as widely as you can – hold 5 – 10 seconds and then relax. Do this twice.

Around the Mouth

Press your lips together tightly – hold 5 – 10 seconds and then relax. (Check your facial area for tension).

Back of the Neck

Gently stretch your head back – hold 5 – 10 seconds and then relax. Do this twice.

Front of the Neck

Touch your chin to your chest – hold 5 – 10 seconds and then relax. Do this twice. (Check your neck and head for tension).

Chest

Take a deep breath through your nose and hold it for 3 seconds, then exhale through your mouth. Do this twice.

Back

Arch your back backwards – hold 5 – 10 seconds and then relax. Do this twice.

Stomach

Suck it into a tight knot – hold 5 – 10 seconds and then relax. Do this twice. (Check your chest and stomach for tension).

Hips and Buttocks

Press the buttocks together tightly – hold 5 – 10 seconds and then relax. Do this twice.

Lower Legs

Raise each foot and point and curl it down – hold 5 – 10 seconds and then relax. Do this twice.

Tense your right calf for 5 – 10 seconds and then relax. Tense your left calf for 5 – 10 seconds and then relax. Do this twice.

Feet

Squeeze (tighten) your right foot for 5 – 10 seconds and then relax. Squeeze (tighten) your left foot for 5 – 10 seconds and then relax. Do this twice.

Breathe

Finish this relaxation exercise by taking a deep breath through the nose – filling lungs completely and holding for a moment. Release through your mouth until you are out of breath. Do this three times.

Mental Wellbeing Tips for Handling the Corona Virus

Create and Maintain a Routine.

It is very tempting to sleep in and or to stay up late when you do not have to be up and ready for school. Try not to change your usual habits of getting up at a certain time and going to bed at a reasonable time. Showering and getting dressed properly is important too.

Create a Workspace

Have a designated area where you work that is a different place to where you sleep or relax will be important- if you can. Be organised and have everything you need for study.

Take a Break

Build little breaks into your routine. Study in shorter periods to be more productive. Chat with a friend for a little while, go for a walk or have a cup of tea. Take a break for better clarity, concentration and a better mood. Take breaks every 40 minutes for five minutes incorporating stretching, breathing, getting daylight and hydration.

Regular contact with your teachers

Keep regular contact with your teachers through Google Classroom. Contact them for recommendations on resources and feedback on your work.

Maintain a Healthy Diet

Keep eating breakfast, dinner, lunch at the usual time. Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables. It is easy to turn to comfort food at this time or when you are bored. Allow yourself to have these treats but make sure you get the required nutrients, vitamins etc. Hydrate by drinking plenty of water. Minimise the energy drinks!

Stay Social

Working from home can be very isolating when you are used to being in school. Keep in contact with friends via phone or text messaging. Our relationships will play a massive role in our wellbeing over the next while. Do not be afraid to reach out and check in on people too. Stay safe!

Exercise

It is important to keep up with getting some physical exercise, doing a home workout, some yoga or even going for a walk or cycle. Where possible, getting outside into wide-open spaces will be extremely beneficial to your mental wellbeing as well as your physical wellbeing. Simply try to get 10,000 steps a day! Exercise helps you to distract you from your worries by focusing on your performance. Exercise releases happy chemicals in your

brain such as serotonin and endorphins. All the good ones! Being fitter helps you sleep better.

Make Use of Extra Time

Make use of some extra time that you may have to pursue an activity that you really enjoy. That could be anything from reading for pleasure, baking, playing an instrument etc. Improve your mood by doing something creative.

Stay Informed

Make sure that you get your information from reputable sources. Avoid the scaremongering on social media and visit websites like who.int or hse.ie. Limit the amount of time you spend scrolling through social media and stop following anybody who makes you feel anxious.

Practice Gratitude

Practice Gratitude every day to remind yourself of the good things in your life.

Get into a Good Sleep Routine

Go to bed early at roughly the same time every night. Don't use screens before bed- phone or computer games, laptop or TV all stimulate the wrong bit of your brain before sleep and lead to you being alert rather than rested. Avoid caffeine in coffee or tea.

If you are worrying about things and have a lot on your mind- keep a notebook and write down the issues before you fall asleep. If you are unable to sleep get up, go downstairs, and do something else such as read a book for twenty minutes.

Remember, teenagers need 9-10 hours' sleep per night.

Prioritise Self Care

Focus on what you can control rather than focusing on how bad things are. Focus on what you can do and what you can control. You can control your hygiene, how your social distance, how you can help others. Try not to think too far ahead and focus on the here and now.

Have a Laugh

Don't forget to have a laugh. Laughing reduces stress hormones and this reduction may result in higher immune system performance. It also triggers the release of endorphins. So, watch a comedy, funny YouTube clips or have a laugh with friends.

Disconnect at Times

If social media keeps dragging you from your study or sleep, download a programme that will block certain Apps or websites for a given time.

Turn off notifications. A constant buzzing phone is extremely addictive. How many times do you pick up your phone in an hour?

Leave your phone downstairs at night. Using your phone will keep you awake. Give your phone a curfew. Your brain needs a break.

